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# Women in the Economy

## – the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of CEDAW



## Introduction

Dear KARAT News Readers,

I am very happy to present you the special issue of our bulletin. It's 18<sup>th</sup> December 2009 – 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Within the UN General Assembly approval of CEDAW three decades ago, women around the world celebrated the extraordinary success. We finally had a legal binding tool to claim our rights and a definition of discrimination to base on.

Today, 30 years later, women's groups around the world are still celebrating the CEDAW anniversary. We all wish the Convention to become a more powerful and better recognized. There is still a lot of challenges and work to be done. With this regard women's groups around the world keep ask themselves the question: What can we do to make the CEDAW stronger ?

KARAT believes in CEDAW and is committed to work for it's stronger political potential. We are particularly concentrated on economic and social justice, which we find fundamental for the substantive equality and gender equity process. We take the position that economic empowerment is one of the cornerstones for fair, gender-responsive development. This is a bottom-up for our strategy, programmes and project we do.

With this issue we invite you to get familiar with the KARAT actions around CEDAW - events, travels, publications – lately. Please feel free to disseminate this information further and / or join us for better effectiveness.

Have a nice reading !

Kasia Staszewska,

Networking Officer, Project Coordinator

## Our Actions



### **KARAT for OP CEDAW: The project conclusion**

Since January 2008 KARAT has been implementing the project aiming at building capacity of women's NGOs in CEE/CIS region to use Optional Protocol (OP) to CEDAW to forward women's rights. December 2009 is the last month of the project. Thought, it's a time for summary, evaluation and conclusions.

KARAT as a leading agency has been implementing the project together with the women's NGOs in 8 countries: Armenia (Women's Rights Center), Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan Gender Association "Symmetry"), Belarus (Women's Independent Democratic Movement and Public Association "Vitebsk Women's

Club"), Georgia (Women's Political Resource Center), Moldova (Gender Center and Political Club of Women 50/50), Tajikistan (Public Foundation "Panorama"), Ukraine (Ukrainian Women's Fund) and Uzbekistan ("Generation of the Future"). All have been strongly supported by IRAW Asia Pacific, which has been the project strategic partner.

For the last 2 years KARAT has organized 2 capacity building trainings, strategic meetings, issued publications and supported the partners in implementation of the activities on the national level. We have all challenged the fact, that although the significant number of women's NGOs in CEE/CIS countries have used CEDAW reporting mechanism to influence the state policy in the area of gender equality, most women's NGOs in the region lack the practical knowledge of OP CEDAW and of how it can be used to counteract the discrimination of women and violation of women's rights. There is also no specific regional forum to share experience and information related to the issue. The project aimed at filling this gaps and at developing the strategic approach to using OP CEDAW.

On 3-4 December KARAT Coalition met with its partners for the last time within the project framework. The goal was to evaluate the strategy and explore the possibility of further cooperation. During the meeting it became quite clear that the partnership established as well as the OP-CEDAW trainings organized at the regional level by KARAT Coalition and IRAW Asia Pacific acted as a catalyst for multiple actions taken in particular countries by all partners. The meeting allowed the participants to learn about each others' strategies for advancing women's rights through



using CEDAW. The strategies differed depending on the situation in particular countries and on the capacity and field of activity of the organizations engaged. Here are some of the stories:



**\*Tajikistan:** Tajikistan became state party of CEDAW Convention in 1993. Although country signed Optional Protocol in 2001, till now the treaty has not been ratified. CEDAW Committee in its concluding comments from 2007 has stressed the need of ratification of the document.

KARAT's partner - Public Foundation "Panorama" took advantage of the positive political atmosphere and concentrated on activities aimed at having the optional protocol ratified as soon as possible. In order to achieve this goal the coalition of 90 women's organizations "From *de-jure* Equality towards *de-facto* Equality" sent the letter to the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in which it stressed the need of ratifying the Optional Protocol. The round table held by the Coalition was widely covered by the media and followed by the meeting with vice-minister of foreign affairs. As a result the Ministry agreed to address the proposal on ratification of the OP-CEDAW to the President of the Republic. But these are not all activities done by "From *de-jure* Equality towards *de-facto* Equality". In order to foster knowledge on CEDAW and OP CEDAW and ensure sustainable source of information on CEDAW, Coalition has published special brochure dedicated to the Convention and Optional Protocol.

To learn more write (in Russian) to Margarita Mamedova: [rita\\_mamedova@mail.ru](mailto:rita_mamedova@mail.ru)



**\*Belarus:** The project team (Public Association "Women's Independent Democratic Movement" and Public Association "Vitebsk Women's Club") focused on mobilizing women's NGOs and activists to develop the CEDAW alternative report and on disseminating information about CEDAW standards and mechanism through training of teachers and through supporting their anti-discrimination educational scenarios and projects.

To know more you can contact Ludmila Petina at: [petina@open.by](mailto:petina@open.by)



**\*Azerbaijan:** Azerbaijani organization Gender Association "Symmetry" organized 2 trainings on CEDAW and Optional Protocol to CEDAW. The events aimed at raising gender awareness, building capacity for implementation of these human rights instruments at national level, promoting information about CEDAW and facilitating networking and communication. Events also contributed to practical understanding and using of the convention and protocol. Participants were actively involved in the training. They were working with cases and examples in order to

analyze gender relations in a national development context and see how both CEDAW and OP to CEDAW can be applied. Local legislation in the field of human rights and women's right specifically, adopted after CEDAW ratification by Azerbaijan was also discussed.

To learn more write to Gulnara Mamedova: [gmamedova@gmail.com](mailto:gmamedova@gmail.com)



**\*Uzbekistan:** Uzbek organization "Generation of the Future", addressing the victims of trafficking in women, used its skills and knowledge on OP CEDAW to build the capacity of its local branches. The unified training module that would be used for grass-root events was introduced and discussed with the participating NGO partners. A special focus was made on strengthening the capacity of NGO partners in conducting OP-CEDAW trainings at the local level, for local women's committees. The event had its follow-up. After participating in the training in Tashkent the trained

NGO partners held 10 trainings on OP-CEDAW: 8 trainings in 8 regions of Uzbekistan (Andijan, Bukhara, Djizak,

Khorezm, Surkhandarya, Karakalpakstan, Samarkand and Syrdarya) and 2 more in Tashkent. The local seminars were addressed to women's activists, local community leaders dealing with women's issues, teachers, lawyers, parliamentarians and some civil society groups representatives..

For more information about the training, please contact Lilya: [lkhamzayeva@mail.ru](mailto:lkhamzayeva@mail.ru)



**Conclusion:** As the result of the trainings on OP-CEDAW (regional and national levels) conducted within the project, the cases that could potentially be submitted to the CEDAW Committee under the communication procedure were considered. However the whole process of formulating a complaint under OP proved to be more difficult and demanding than it had been expected. One of the main reasons for that is

related with the requirement of exhausting the domestic remedies – the necessary condition for the communication to be accepted by the Committee. During the discussion held within the meeting the following barriers keeping women from going through the process were mentioned:

- ❖ the pressure put on them, as a consequence of the patriarchal system, to not reveal the facts and seek justice;
- ❖ the fear of possible sanctions for claims against the state;
- ❖ the difficulties in proving the discrimination on the basis of sex (e.g. in the labour market or when the law or practice officially favors women but in fact leads to discrimination);
- ❖ extremely long duration of the legal processes at national level;
- ❖ lack of adequate laws or legal mechanisms;
- ❖ distrust for courts;
- ❖ lack of access to legal support (e.g. to affordable legal counseling, gender-sensitive lawyers or – in some cases- to any lawyers)

KARAT Coalition finds the problem of women's access to justice extremely important and aims at exploring it during the following years. With that regard we are already getting ready for the project follow-up which has just been accepted by the Oxfam Novib. Check our website for the updates coming soon at:

<http://www.karat.org/karat,5,en.html> or write to Ola at: [aleksandra.solik@karat.org.pl](mailto:aleksandra.solik@karat.org.pl)



### Women in the Economy – the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of CEDAW



### KARAT Calendar for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CEDAW

With the primary aim to promote CEDAW as a political tool and emphasize the CEE & CIS women perspective for economic empowerment KARAT prepared the calendar dedicated to the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Our calendar consists of pictures taken by professional and amateur photographers-women from the countries of Central Asia and Eastern Europe – which have also been the part of the KARAT exhibition created within the framework of the project: „Through their eyes, through ours. Raising public awareness about development problems faced by women from developing countries in the EU Eastern Neighbourhood, Balkans and

Central Asia”. There are also CEDAW articles quotes.

The calendar is being printed right now and should be ready next week. If you are interested to have it, let Ewa know at: [ewa.pintera@karat.org.pl](mailto:ewa.pintera@karat.org.pl).

The calendar has been produced thanks to the Oxfam Novib support.

## Our Special

### Get familiar with OP CEDAW action of women's NGOs in Tajikistan



On behalf of the Coalition of 90 Tajik NGOs from all over the country “From equality de jure to equality de facto” and of the participants of the Round Table “The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination Discrimination Against Women as an additional mechanism for the guarantee of women’s rights” (November 13, 2009, Dushanbe) we would like to give you our respect and acknowledgement for your attention to the problem of women’s empowerment in the Tajik society. This is the first paragraph of the letter that Tajik Coalition has sent to President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon asking for the Optional Protocol ratification and CEDAW implementation. You can read the English version of the letter at: [http://www.karat.org/op\\_cedaw/letter-to-president.html](http://www.karat.org/op_cedaw/letter-to-president.html)

## Our Publications

### KARAT OP CEDAW Toolkit

Within the framework of the “KARAT for OP CEDAW” project we have successfully developed the on-line toolkit: *Optional Protocol to CEDAW and how it can be used to advance women’s human rights*. The toolkit contains the basic information on the OP and CEDAW including: the details on communication and inquiry procedures, the obligations of the states parties, the impact of reservations to CEDAW under the OP CEDAW, information on: the cases already decided by CEDAW, general recommendations, reporting process, role of NGOs. The English version of the Toolkit developed by KARAT was further translated by our partners to: Russian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgian, Romanian, Tajik, Ukrainian and Uzbek.

For the links to the Toolkits please visit the KARAT website: [http://www.karat.org/op\\_cedaw/useful-link.html](http://www.karat.org/op_cedaw/useful-link.html)

KARAT thanks OXFAM Novib for its financial support.



### OP CEDAW resource guide in Russian

Our Rights Are Not Optional! Advocating for the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) through its Optional Protocol” is a title of the great resource guide successfully translated to Russian within the programme of IRAW Asia Pacific (International Women’s Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific) with the support of KARAT Coalition. This easy-to-use publication seeks to contribute to the ratification process of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW as well as to its effective use at the national level. The guide contains practical information for the individuals, women’s rights NGOs and other actors advocating for women’s human rights. The Resource Guide comes in three sections. Section A provides a general overview of the CEDAW Convention and its

Optional Protocol; Section B details the legal, political and strategic dimensions in promoting the OP ratification; Section C focuses on enhancing advocacy and the treaty use. Set of handouts and the supplementary materials are available within the publication as well.

To download the guide please visit: [http://www.karat.org/karat\\_5\\_publications.en.html](http://www.karat.org/karat_5_publications.en.html)

If you want to have it posted please write to Aleksandra at: [aleksandra.solik@karat.org.pl](mailto:aleksandra.solik@karat.org.pl)



### **Development cooperation from the women's rights perspective**

This is the title of the new resource guide published in Polish by the KARAT Coalition within the framework of the projects: Social Watch and Connect! East South West Women for Development. This is one of the first of its kind publication issued in Poland. The author argued that although CEDAW is the global women's rights bill to be followed on the national level, the Convention also constitutes the framework for development cooperation worldwide. Implementation of CEDAW is a pre-requisite for the MDGs achievement.

Publication is divided to 3 sections: 1. Why gender perspective is essential in development cooperation? 2. How does the development practise looks like? 3. Women's as agents for change.

Publication, so far only in Polish is available on: <http://www.karat.org/karat,7,What+is+new%3F,en.html>

We plan to translate it to English any time soon. KARAT Secretariat wish to thank One World Action for their support and sharing their photos to be used in publication.

## **Our CEDAW travels**

### **International CEDAW Conference, London, 11.11.2009**

Over 100 women from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe strategized, shared their CEDAW experiences and lessons learned during the event organized by One World Action and Womankind. KARAT, as a WIDE regional platform, was present and contributed to the discussion.

Three decades after approving the Convention most of the challenges from 1979 remain the same. Women still constitute the majority of the world's poor and illiterate. They are significantly under-represented in the political life, become violence victims much too often. There is no doubt that CEDAW is still relevant, particularly now- during the time of crisis – when women are again the most likely to pay the price.

The conference participants reflected on actions to advance women's human rights in Tanzania, Zambia, Bolivia, South Africa, India, Nepal and UK. None of this would ever happen without CEDAW. Being internationally recognized as a human rights bill, it has a binding power for the states to comply with. The countries' performance is therefore another question that do not really undermine the Convention content.

CEDAW has a complex nature, so do the related actions. There are many entry points that women's groups around the world could follow. Advocating for the financial resources and the CEDAW implementation framework; promoting the need for the gender disaggregated data ; exploring the new gender architecture within the UN; strengthening the accountability actions -to mention just a few.

The London conference was a great opportunity for the women round the world to reflect and take a stock on the progress made. This one day of discussions and workshops proved again the CEDAW importance and relevance, despite the state dynamic being disappointingly slow. The participants re-confirmed their will to continue working with CEDAW and make it stronger as far as the political change is concerned. The fact is, that woman trapped in poverty may not have an idea about CEDAW. But it doesn't mean that the Convention can not positively challenge her life. CEDAW is not what the governments are doing but what have been achieved. Hopefully, we will be more happy with the progress on the CEDAW 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, coming soon in 2019.

### **Capacity Development Workshop, Istanbul, 19-20.11.2009**

KARAT was present at the Capacity Development Workshop for NGO Women's Rights Advocates in Commemoration of 30th CEDAW Anniversary that took place in Istanbul, Turkey. The workshop, organized by UNIFEM Sub-regional Office and Human Rights and Governance Program of the Open Society Institute, brought together women advocates from CEE and CIS countries, the members of the CEDAW Committee and other CEDAW experts. The event focused on using CEDAW as a tool to advance gender equality in the CEE and CIS region and



concentrated on 2 thematic areas: violence against women and women's economic rights. Among the speakers were the former and current CEDAW Committee members Feride Acar, Victoria Popescu and Dubravka Simonovic who discussed the significance of CEDAW, the dynamics of the comprehension of the rights the Convention has been protecting in the past 30 years and its role in combating violence against women.

KARAT was represented by Aleksandra Solik, who as a speaker in Women's Economic Rights Session shared our experience in enhancing the protection of labour rights of women working in the large super and hypermarket chains in Poland. According to the organizers the presentations delivered during the meeting will be available at the UNIFEM website. You might want to take a look: <http://www.unifem.org/>

### **International Conference: „Libere di Essere” Rome, 21.11.2009**

KARAT, as a WIDE regional platform, has been invited to participate in the event organized by Fondazione Pangea Onlus in cooperation with Internazionale Casa delle Donne, Provincia di Rome and Action Aid. Conference was devoted to problem of women's rights situation around the world, with special attention given to gender based violence and CEDAW.

When we think about abuse of women's rights we are usually focusing on problems faced by women living in our neighborhood / region. However, there are many challenges we face that remain the same anywhere we go. With this regard the participation in the conference was mixed. Representatives from Italian NGO's met with partner organizations from India, Afghanistan, Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Mozambique. Speakers in their interventions were outlining the biggest problems evoking from gender based violence faced by women in their states. NGO activists were trying to put the problem of gender based violence in the context of CEDAW Convention, highlighting when CEDAW can be used as an effective tool in combating violence and when its scope is not sufficient. Issues raised during the conference were very diverse, starting from domestic violence, through economic rights of rural women, to shadow reporting procedure.

KARAT was represented by Daria Suwala, who underlined the role of CEDAW and Optional Protocol as instruments of women's rights implementation with a special emphasis on the right to live in dignity, right to free decisions concerning marriage and need to fight with forced prostitution and human trafficking. Strengths and weakness of CEDAW and OP were highlighted and KARAT's Coalition program on promotion of Optional Protocol in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asian countries was also briefly presented.

The conference program is available on: <http://www.pangeaonlus.org/>

## Take a look ...



On the occasion of the CEDAW 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary KARAT joined the WIDE Network campaign to remind the European Union about the importance and timeliness of CEDAW for women's human rights and about the EU's commitments to advance gender equality. Check the new WIDE Blog for CEDAW with the KARAT input at: <http://cedaw30.wordpress.com>

The end

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